What could ministry look like if money was no object? Nineteen United Methodist pastors across Oklahoma spent nine months considering the possibilities.

From early childhood development to after school programming, Bibles and Brew gatherings to sober football parties, ukulele lessons to a worship festival and conference, no dream was too big or too lofty for the Academy for Innovative Ministry to explore.

There was just one catch: every pastor would have to create and present a plan that could bring their God-sized vision to life.

The Academy for Innovative Ministry

The Academy for Innovative Ministry invited select participants to imagine innovative ways of engaging in ministry in their local contexts. The academy was led by Derrek Belase, director of Connectional Ministry, and Chris Tiger, director of New Faith Communities.

Academy participants were nominated by their district superintendents to attend a series of learning sessions, including intercultural development, new expressions and models of church ministry, the process of discernment, adaptive leadership skills, and how to create an action plan. The academy formed triads, or groups of three, with each pastor developing an original plan of action. Each pastor formally presented their plan in September and received a $2,000 grant. A total of 17 pastors completed the academy.

Belase believes it can be hard for churches to take risks when it comes to developing innovative ministry, especially when it comes to the cost. He said that leaders want to try new things, but the possibility of failure keeps a lot of churches from investing in innovation. He sees the academy grants as an opportunity for pastors to pursue innovation in their ministry contexts.

“All organizations need some research and development money, but few churches can afford to budget that,” Belase said. “The academy grants give some pastors a chance to try something out and see what happens, but with a solid plan.”

Tiger said the goals of the academy were to invest in leadership and to create a culture of innovation in the conference.

“We can’t keep doing things the same way and expect different results,” Tiger said. “I think..."
Keepers of Faith, Hope and Recovery

"Keepers of Faith, Hope and Recovery is a ministry designed to reach out in the name of Christ to people affected by the disease of addiction."

Guthrie First UMC

"Reinvigorating Guthrie First UMC so that there will continue to be Methodists dreaming like Jesus in Guthrie, Oklahoma."

Oklahoma."

dreaming like Jesus in Guthrie,
that there will continue to be Methodists
"Reinvigorating Guthrie First UMC so
Guthrie First UMC
cone, or cup of coffee, at a time.
the love of Jesus with one delicious sno-
sno-cone and Coffee Stand
A Snowball’s Chance: Mobile Sno-cone and Coffee Stand
"Goodrich Memorial UMC will be a community presence that is able to share the love of Jesus with one delicious sno-cone, or cup of coffee, at a time."

Spark Tank

After the initial grant presentations in September, each triad was asked to nominate one of their members as a finalist for a second round of grant presentations. Academy participants chose six pastors to move on: Revs. Dane Lemmons, Lisa Miller, Dr. Tiffany Nagel Monroe, Shyloe O'Neal, Desi Sharp and Trey Witzel.

“When the triad nominated me, I was both honored and humbled. I know that sounds cheesy and trite, but it was true,” said Lemmons, a drug court counselor and associate pastor at Highland Park UMC in Stillwater. “To have at least two others say this was a great idea and doable, that it was not too much to ‘dream like Jesus,’ was absolutely awesome.”

Sharp, pastor at Goodrich Memorial UMC in Norman, said she felt a deep sense of gratitude to the people who encouraged her idea: a mobile sno-cone and coffee stand that could provide temporary employment to those struggling to find a job.

“I believe it has the potential to be something well beyond a source of tasty treats; I believe something this simple could in real and immediate ways begin transforming the world,” Sharp said. “To have this affirmed in this particular way is a humbling experience.”

Nagel Monroe, pastor at St. Paul’s UMC in Shawnee, said she looks forward to seeing what her fellow triad members do with their ideas.

“The colleagues in my triad are capable, creative and inspiring leaders,” said Nagel Monroe. “I’m thankful that they saw something in my project that had the potential to benefit from moving forward at this time. I have no doubt their projects will have mighty impacts in the future.”

Final presentations were made on Nov. 1 at First UMC in Edmond. Belase and Tiger invited four conference leaders to act as a Spark Tank panel: Rev. Jay Smith, associate pastor at New Covenant UMC in Edmond and chair of New Faith Communities; Rev. Susan Whitley, pastor at Skiatook UMC and chair of the conference Discipleship Ministry Team; Alan Herndon, director of gift planning for the Oklahoma Methodist Foundation; and Meagan Ewton, editor of publications for the Oklahoma Conference.

The panelists heard the proposals and asked questions related to each ministry idea. They also determined the final grant awards, which ranged from $3,000 to $8,000 and were awarded in addition to the finalists’ original $2,000 academy grants.

Smith was impressed by the time and energy the presenters put into their work despite the significant workloads clergy can have from day to day.

“The primary thing that excited me was the presenters’ willingness to dream big,” Smith said. “In the midst of an obvious season of tension within the UMC, you still have pastors and leaders in local churches who are dreaming God-sized dreams for what the future of their local context looks like.”

Whitley said it was exciting to see people dreaming big dreams and thinking outside the box regarding the possibilities for ministry.

“It was amazing to see the variety of their ideas and how they were reaching out to people in their community and in the conference,” Whitley said. “It was amazing to see the things they were doing to bring people to Jesus.”

Giving Shape to Dreams

Witzel believes everyone dreams of something “new” at some point. He said the language and theories he learned in the academy helped him “give word and form to the often amorphous vocation that is pastoral leadership.”

“We all look around and know that what we see often isn’t what God intended, but we’ve been so conditioned to put a cap on our dreams, to settle for the floor over the ceiling for what can be done,
that all of our dreams become pragmatic concessions,” Witzel said. “What’s been exciting through the academy is, one, knowing that others are dreaming and I’m not alone, and, two, our conference knows that it’s only through our dreams that we can make disciples for the transformation of the world.”

As with any new venture, those God-sized dreams took time to form and refine. One of the academy’s areas of focus was to help participants create a Ministry Action Plan, or MAP.

“Churches can launch into projects without solid MAPs,” Belase said. “Participants in the academy had the chance to work with coaches to create solid plans which can guide them and their churches into a new era of thinking and dreaming like Jesus.”

O’Neal’s vision of a three-day worship festival and conference took shape after questions she was led to ask during an April learning session on Fresh Expressions, or expressions of church designed for people uninterested in institutional church. She said the group synergy of the academy helped her generate and fine-tune ideas that she later translated into a MAP.

“I started to consider people and places who are not yet benefitting from the contextualized mission of making disciples,” O’Neal said of the brainstorming process. “I still didn’t have a single idea, but was beginning to notice what brought me hope and energy for ministry.”

Miller, a former dance and performing arts school owner, said she considered several projects before electing to teach children how to play the ukulele.

“The Lord used the joy of music and dance to heal my broken heart. He used the performing arts to make me feel that I had value,” Miller said in her presentation. “The talents we possess are from our Father. (They’re) gifts that, in some cases, can help raise us out of the ashes… You never know who will be the next worship leader, classical pianist, or that prodigy child who can pick up any instrument and play it.”

Tiger said most academy participants had not created a MAP before. Because some churches are smaller or less formal, he said ministry leaders sometimes feel no need for a formal plan, but he believes it helps leaders think of all the elements a proposed project will need.

“I think the MAP gives them greater buy-in when not only on a local level, but also if they need to go outside the church and present for a grant,” Tiger said. “With the presentations they were able to do, they could go outside the church and make a presentation to someone and possibly get grants or funding from other sources.”

**Dreams Bigger than Dollars**

Though ministry grants were always intended to be a part of the academy, Belase and Tiger kept the grant amounts undisclosed until the respective presentations had been given. Belase wanted to ensure that concerns about cost would not dampen the visioning process.

“I think a lot of times we get caught up in how much money a grant is worth, and then we dream to the size of the grant instead of the size of the dream God has for us,” Belase said. “We wanted these pastors to dream as big as they wanted and then create a MAP so they can see how their God-sized dream could be possible. There are resources out there; we don’t have to create them on our own.”

Witzel’s proposal centered not on building up his church in Edmond, but on helping revitalize First UMC in Guthrie. Though the project officially launched towards the end of the academy, Witzel said the ministry partnership between the two churches would have continued even without an academy grant.

“It’s going to help ensure that Guthrie FUMC can take the next step towards local autonomy. The funding is going to help bolster our children and youth programs, and bring in local worship leadership.”

Nagel Monroe’s ministry project also included a strong element of partnership. St. Paul’s UMC partnered with Shawnee Public Schools, Sooner Start and Citizen Potawatomi Nation to bring Early Foundations, a program developed by the Oklahoma Autism Center in 2007, to Shawnee. The site at St. Paul’s opened in August. Nagel Monroe said the academy grants they received will help the church ramp up discipleship aspects of the partnership, including quarterly Parents Night Out events and an ASD-friendly Vacation Bible School in the summer.

“There are no other programs like this...
in Shawnee. As churches, we should be doing more to include ASD families and families of children with disabilities into the life of our communities,” Nagel Monroe said. “We need trained and compassionate leaders in children’s ministry programs that families can trust their children with while they worship and engage in discipleship opportunities. St. Paul’s wanted to build on our relationship with Early Foundations and make a concerted effort to provide such ministry to our community.”

Tiger said the projects didn’t need to be new churches or faith communities. Instead, the goal was for participants to try something bigger than they would have thought of without the academy process.

“Some of our proposals, and some that were forwarded to the Spark Tank, were ideas that needed a lot of funding and more than we could give them,” Tiger said. “We hope that the pastors in the academy can present their MAPs to others for possible funding as well.”

One of those projects was O’Neal’s three-day worship festival and conference. Though the grant total she received was a fraction of her proposed budget, she said she is grateful for it and wants to find a way to take the next step in bringing her God-sized vision to life.

“It is scary to dream big! There are people who will tell you to think smaller, more gradually, something attainable,” O’Neal said. “That doesn’t mean you take their advice. Instead you bring them along, accept their help in refining the idea. Jesus used a team approach; why don’t you try it too?”

Both Whitley and Smith expressed hope that the grant finalists would be able to find additional funding for their projects. Whitley suggested connecting with community partners and other grant agencies, while Smith recommended including tiered levels of financing in grant proposals.

“Don’t let an initial lack of funding keep you from dreaming big dreams,” Whitley said. “Don’t be limited to the resources in your church. Continue to reach out, and don’t be discouraged.”

**Dream On**

The inaugural Academy for Innovative Ministry closed with a prayer of blessing. Tiger said there are plans for a second academy to be held in conjunction with conference year instead of the calendar year. He said this would help prevent pastors who might be reappointed at Annual Conference from having to drop out of the academy, something that happened for two participants this year.

“I was really pleased with how things turned out for this,” Tiger said. “You come up with an idea, and you don’t know how it’s going to really be until you did it, and I think what resulted was good for the participants. Derrek and I appreciated being a part of it just to guide the process.”

Lemmons believes the academy was worth the effort, a sentiment he shared with Tiger and Belase before he knew he would receive a grant. He especially appreciated learning how to take God-sized dreams and create a MAP to bring those dreams to life.

“If God is showing you a need, then God is more than likely calling you to do something; if God is calling you to do something, then God will equip you to get it done,” Lemmons said. “It may not be in the way you are expecting, but you will be equipped and you will be able to do something.”

The lesson that taught Miller the most was about getting buy-in as a part of ministry planning. She said it was wonderful to get to know her fellow pastors better and to see the innovative ministry being done across the state.

“It is okay and probably even a good idea to start small, even when the dream is big,” Miller said. “Saturate it in prayer. Pray over the concept, pray for inspiration from the Holy Spirit, pray for heavenly resources to open up and for the right people to come forward and be a part of it.”

Sharp enjoyed the academy and found the training sessions informative. She said she is excited and thankful to have money to put toward a vehicle for her mobile sno-cone and coffee stand. She encouraged pastors who don’t know where to start to just begin dreaming and praying.

“God knows what the world needs and what your gifts are,” Sharp said. “Start talking about it with the people around you who love Jesus, love the church, and know you well. Listen. Do some research. And keep praying.”§
MANGUM, OKLAHOMA IS A SMALL TOWN WITH HUGE ENERGY—SERVING THEIR COMMUNITY

Community connects through children.

Small towns can be underrated in their vitality and potential, but don’t let that reputation keep you from seeing the opportunities available. Mangum, Oklahoma is a town that has a passionate community active in reaching out to others with the Love of God. The First United Methodist Church in Mangum is doing great things in their little town of just around 3,000 people.

Beginning with a summer lunch program to minister to a number of children in the area, Mangum FUMC was reaching kids every day. As this program developed, the children would not just come for a meal, but they would stay to play, too. How can they do more? The church had considered a playground, but funds were limited and other needs took priority.

As the gathering of children grew, the need for a safe playground became more urgent. The Foundation was able to provide funds for the installation of brand new playground equipment. After installing the equipment and some landscaping to clear the lawn stickers, Mangum First had a safe place for the young families to gather and play.

Reaching kids was just the beginning. The program has successfully grown into truly impacting their community for good.
Maurice Hawthorne stands in front of the cross and flame in front of his home church, Wilburton First UMC. Hawthorne has been involved in various United Methodist ministries in both Nebraska and Oklahoma, but he has never been ordained. The retired science teacher is a Certified Lay Minister and has served faithfully in the Lake Country District since the 1980s.

Photo by Meagan Ewton.
How did you get started in lay servant ministries?

In the fall of ’78 or the spring of ’79, we had a brush arbor (revival gathering) out here in the courtyard, and we were going to have it for two weeks. The first Sunday went fine. Then Friday night or Saturday night, I don’t remember which, the pastor calls me and he says, “Can you fill in for me tomorrow? I’m in the hospital.” So, I went up there visit him in the hospital, and we looked at where he had planned to go with his sermon series. He said you can do whatever you want, so I went ahead and completed his sermon series. About a year later, we had a lay servant training. I took that first basic course and then started taking advanced courses every time I got the opportunity.

By the time you took your first lay servant course, you had been volunteering as a lay person for nearly 20 years. What made you want to take the training?

It really was a matter of getting the certification. As a teacher, I didn’t have any trouble getting up in front of the group and filling a pulpit, but it was more a matter of trying to organize and actually get into the certification program. In the Nebraska conference I had never heard about it. From the whole time I lived there, I never heard about the formal training program. The first training I went to was actually in the basement here. We had a husband and wife team come who were trainers. That was the first time I really had been involved as far as training because of lack of availability.

In general, what would you say being a lay servant or lay speaker means?

In general, lay servant ministries develops leaders for the church. It’s not necessarily just for individuals that need to step in at a pulpit, though those that have the desire to do so are surely given the opportunity. It also trains leaders for any aspect of working in the church—or any volunteer organization for that matter—as far as how to lead, how to be a leader, how to develop leaders, how to lead a discussion without monopolizing it, how to deal with persons who are suffering loss. There’s a number of things.

The basic training develops leaders. It doesn’t necessarily have to be a speaker in a pulpit; it is good basic leadership training for any setting. When you go to the advanced courses, you get into specifics about how to preach, how to prepare a sermon, how to deliver it, and emphasis areas like grief counseling and hospital visitation.

I’ve been to the one on preaching and, when another one came up a couple years later, I asked the district superintendent at that time, do you want me to enroll for that class? And he said no, you could teach it. So, I have taught a number of courses, nearly all of them through the years.

What does being a lay servant mean for you personally?

To step in on a moment’s call. I have received calls on Friday night or Saturday night about needing pulpit supply the next Sunday. Sometimes that’s been on single occasions, and sometimes it’s been on an extended case. A couple instances there were family emergencies, and the pastor had to leave to deal with critical situations that were extended for three or four
weeks. In some instances, I’ve served as interim supply between pastors. When a pastor’s reassigned, it may take a while to re-fill a pulpit. So, to me, it means being ready to do whatever is requested.

When I was asked to be a district lay leader, it was something that I am trained to do, but it was still something that required a lot of thought, a lot prayer. It’s a big responsibility. I think my background in lay servant ministry really prepared me for that. There have been instances where I’ve had more than one request for a single weekend and I’ve had to turn somebody down because of it.

If someone’s interested in speaking from the pulpit, there are many opportunities that are presented through certified lay servant training because your name goes on a list that district superintendents maintain. We can contact persons who are available, that made themselves available, and it gives the district superintendent a chance to fill a pulpit for some particular church in the district. They’ve had a number of lay speakers who have grown into the pastorate and are now full-time pastors. It’s a good source of pulpit supply on temporary basis but in some instances, it’s turned into a longer-term full-time ministry.

Why does the church need lay servants?

One thing our district superintendent Larry Bowman says is every church should have this as a Sunday school class and train many folks for leadership roles in the church. The basic course is a good leadership training course. I had a couple of folks in one of my training sessions who are now strong leaders in AA. In that respect, the leadership training portion is extremely beneficial for any venue, not just the church.

But the church definitely needs leaders. In many cases, we do need people that are trained enough to be able to step in and fill a pulpit on a moment’s notice because emergencies come about. Not everybody is so motivated or equipped, or so inclined, but those that are, it gives them an opportunity to be available.

You’re a teacher with a variety of interests and abilities. Is there an aspect of loving learning or valuing education that makes you more likely to engage in this kind of ministry?

That’s one of those questions of which came first, the cart or the horse, the chicken or the egg?

When I was in college, I was in Alpha Phi Omega, which is a national fraternity that was a service organization essentially for Boy Scouts. I was working with that group, and we had a convention on a Friday and Saturday. We got home late Saturday night, and I was asked to fill a pulpit Sunday morning. When I was standing up there in that tiny little church, it struck me that I need to be available to do this. I always felt it was my duty, my responsibility to be available to do what I could, when I could, wherever I could.

That’s very Wesleyan of you.

When I was in a leadership training conference for district leaders, we were going to have communion in the center of a big meeting hall in the camp. When it was time to serve the elements, one pastor said, “I do not want any of you coming to the altar rail until you are completely, absolutely, 100 percent convinced that Christ died for you and for your sin. It’s not an intellectual knowledge; I want this to be a full knowledge.”

People immediately were packing to leave, and they had their cars loaded and were on their way out. There were about six of us still sitting there, and all at once, I had this Wesleyan experience: I felt my heart strangely warmed. I mean, the truly literal Wesley experience. That was back in late October ’58, and from that point on, I knew that I needed to be available for whenever, wherever I was called. I guess if you were to say when did or how did that decision come about, I think that would probably be it.

The UMC is approaching a time of potential disruption and change. How do you see the role of the lay servant in a time like this?

I can’t speak for others, but I think for me at least it’s to encourage people to pray for the will of God and hope that we don’t get into name calling. I think the last conference was disruptive more than healing. I don’t know what this next conference will be, but I think as far as the lay servant goes, our role is to maintain people’s focus on God and the church as a whole, not issues. Issues divide us, but Christ should center us.

A lot of folks feel somewhat caught in the middle.

People in the pulpit, many of them are in the same situation. Many of them have family members who are gay or lesbian and may have acquaintances that are. You can’t come down and condemn all of them. I really don’t know where we’re going on that; I just hope that the church doesn’t split as a result, and I’m afraid it might.

What is one time when, as a lay servant, you were able to impact someone else?

It was after I’d lost my wife and had been through the grief process. I should say I was going through the grief process; it is something you don’t get out of. It was several months later, and I ran into one of the faculty members of the college. It was a friend of mine. She had just lost her father, and I did not know. I just asked her how she was doing, and she told me that she was really down. Now this is a psychology professor, and we were talking about grief. Here’s a woman that knew about grief, and I did not know. I just asked her how she was doing, and she told me that she was really down. Now this is a psychology professor, and we were talking about grief. Here’s a woman that knew about grief, dealing with grief, and taught it probably every year if not every semester, and yet she was having a hard time dealing with it. And I think sometimes those interactions...
which have nothing to do with the church stand out.

I think there’s one thing I’ve learned: you can prepare, and you can plan, but once you get into a setting, the Lord may have something different in mind. I was speaking over here at the Presbyterian church one Sunday morning a number of years ago, and I had a sermon prepared. About three minutes into it I could see that I’d lost them, and they weren’t following. My immediate response is, what do I do now? And the passage had to do with harvest, the fruitful harvest. So, I just reverted back to my childhood.

“That reminds me that I was born and raised on a farm. The passage said the grain may produce tenfold, thirtyfold or 100-fold, but it was a dry year in ’55 or ’56, I don’t remember which. I was running a combine all day long, and we didn’t get a truck full. I mean, it was hard times.” And it was then that I got them back. They were with me. Afterwards, one of the guys told me, “that was the best thing I’ve ever heard.” It wasn’t that way when I started.

Do you think that there needs to be a call for more people to be involved as lay servants or for more people to consider having that kind of leadership training?

In a period of uncertainty, I think leaders are valuable, open-minded leaders especially. Somebody that’s able to see beyond the immediate problem, maybe, and look toward a resolution. You need people who can moderate the discussion without it getting out of hand.

How has being a lay servant affected the way you live out your faith?

It’s definitely deepened my faith. It gives me an avenue to express my faith and hopefully try to influence others.

At our district charge conferences, we had nine sub-districts and missional areas, and I went with our district superintendent to each one of those. I was talking in particular terms about campus ministry, because that’s one of my big highlights. I’ve been actively involved in campus ministry since 1980, and with the monies coming in the way they are at the present time, I was encouraging everybody to support all of them.

I went on to talk about campus ministry and how it’s the training ground for leaders outside of college. It’s a transition between youth groups in church to the campus setting to try to prevent them from going astray, to keep them connected to the church, to training our future leaders, both pastoral and lay leaders in the future. I said that’s where the rubber meets the road, and that’s kind of where I see lay servant ministries. That’s where our faith meets action. It may be cliché but it’s true. Putting your faith into action, I mean, that’s the reality of it, whether it’s a speaking role, whether it’s leading a group, whether it’s just being a more active, or a more dedicated individual in the pews.§

Learn more about lay servant ministries at www.okumc.org/layservantministries.

Help NSO celebrate our Centennial Anniversary with your end-of-year contributions!

Any donation made to NSO before January 31, 2020 will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to $40,000 by the Carl C. Anderson, Sr. and Marie Jo Anderson Charitable Foundation, along with an anonymous donor! Your gifts will support our vital housing programs for homeless women and children, homeless young men and homeless adults with mental illness. There are so many Oklahomans in need this Christmas season. Help NSO continue our mission now and for the next 100 years! Please make a difference today!

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Transforming lives and encouraging independence through safe, healthy homes, dental care and nutrition.
During Advent, United Methodists break out the Nativity scenes and the Christmas lights to prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Every candle is a reminder of hope; every decoration is full of meaning.

In many, though not all, churches, among the colorful ornaments and blinking lights lie an assortment of symbols known simply as Chrismons.

Chrismons, or Christ monograms, are ornaments made out of Christian symbols. They are often made by hand in white and gold, colors chosen to represent the purity and majesty of Jesus Christ.

The original patterns were developed in 1957 by Frances Kipps Spencer and the women of the Ascension Lutheran Church in Danville, Virginia, and the church maintains a Chrismons Ministry to this day.

“Mrs. Spencer stated a tree was never finished until someone came to see it and have the story of Christ explained to them through the ornaments,” the ALC states on its website.

Today, many churches have a Chrismon tree dedicated to these thought-provoking symbols of Christ. Though new symbols have been added over the last 62 years, all Chrismons point believers toward a deeper faith in Christ.

**Common Types of Chrismons**

- **Anchor**: Represents the security and stability believers have in Jesus Christ.

- **Chalice**: Represents the sacrament of communion and reminds believers of God’s forgiveness.

- **Dove**: A symbol of the Holy Spirit. Points down to represent the Holy Spirit’s appearance as a dove when Jesus was baptized.

- **Eastern Cross**: A symbol of the cross commonly used in many Eastern or Orthodox churches.

- **Furca (or Upsilon) Cross**: Also called the Thieves Cross. Represents the thieves crucified on either side of Jesus; symbolizes the choice between good and evil.

- **Keys**: Symbolic of the keys of Heaven. Reminds believers to share the gospel with the world.

- **Manger**: Reminds believers of the manger where Mary placed Jesus after his birth.

- **Rose**: The white rose is a symbol of Mary. A Christmas rose may also be used to symbolize the Nativity.

- **Shell**: Represents the sacrament of baptism and recalls the waters where Jesus was baptized.

- **Trefoil**: A symbol of the trinity. Each circle represents one aspect of God: Creator, Redeemer, and Holy Spirit.
The Iota-Chi
A monogram representing Jesus Christ in itallic form. In English, this would be JC, but in Greek, it is IX (Iota Chi).

The Crown
Symbolizes the kingship of Christ, his victory over death, and the reward of the faithful.

The Seven Flames
Symbolizes the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Triquetra and Circle
The triquetra, a figure made of three separate and equal arcs, symbolizes one God in three distinct persons. The circle is for eternity.

The Fish
The letters for the Greek word for fish (ichthus) represent Jesus. The fish also recalls Jesus calling his disciples to be fishers of men.

Alpha-Omega Cross
The letters Alpha and Omega recall Jesus, who is the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

The Ship
The ship represents the church, which is journeying toward heaven. It also reminds believers of Jesus' miracles on the Sea of Galilee.

IHS
"IHS" are the first three letters of Jesus' name when spelled in Greek.

The Crown
Symbolizes the kingship of Christ, his victory over death, and the reward of the faithful.

The Butterfly
Symbolizes the resurrection of Jesus and everlasting life for the believer.

Coptic Cross with Birds
Represents faithful believers in Christ.

The Chrismon Tree
Chrismon symbols resourced from free patterns found at WhyChristmas.com. Chrismon tree photo taken at Calumet UMC by Meagan Ewton.
Second-Look Books

Books that deserve a fresh look in 2020

"A Long Obedience in the Same Direction"
by Eugene H. Peterson

Society too often looks for quick fixes and instant gratifications. Peterson’s book examines Psalms 120-134, also called the Song of Ascents, and teaches the reader how they may grow in Christian discipleship. The depth of information and inspiration in this book will stay with you for some time as you realize that this walk we have with Christ involves a long obedience in the same direction.

"This Day: A Wesleyan Way of Prayer"
by Laurence Hull Stookey

Month-long study guides have never been this flexible. Stookey seamlessly combines daily meditation, special circumstances, holy days, life events and the liturgical calendar into a 31-day prayer study that feels fresh month after month, year after year. The prayer study is set up for both individual and group settings.

"The Three-Box Solution"
by Vijay Govindarajan

With many church growth and renewal experts stating the need for the church today to become more strategic in its planning and more innovative in its ministries, this book contains principles and a process that could help any church, religious organization, institution or committee in its efforts to reach beyond its walls into the larger world.

"A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood: A Faith-Based Discussion Companion"
by Discipleship Ministries

This book is one of the many resources made to accompany the film "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood." The book is divided into five sections that mirror themes from the film: “Feelings are Okay,” “Prodigal,” “Anything that is mentionable is manageable,” “Forgiveness and Reconciliation,” and “Practice, Practice, Practice.”
At Epworth Villa, there are plenty of enthusiasts, including Marsha Purtell. As Epworth’s newly appointed Chaplain, she knows firsthand about all the great things this community has to offer. “There are awesome living opportunities here, and you will be amazed! We have to dispel the myth it’s expensive to move here when, in reality, it’s quite affordable and offers so much.”

Add visiting Marsha Purtell at Epworth Villa to your to-do list and call us today at (405) 367-1134.
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Thank you for your support. Your giving impacts the lives of children, youth, and families across the state. Donate before December 31 to count towards 2019 tax deductions.

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